

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VALLETTA 0025

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MT

SUBJ: MALTA: QUARTERLY POLITICAL/ECONOMIC REPORT

REF: VALLETTA 1589

1. SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL/ECONOMIC SITUATION IN MALTA WAS HIGHLIGHTED DURING THE FORTH QUARTER BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA, AND BY PERSISTENT, AND WORSENING, ECONOMIC PRESSURES CAUSED BY INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT. AS THE QUARTER ENDED, PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF WARNED THE NATION OF A DIFFICULT YEAR AHEAD BECAUSE OF WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WHICH INEVITABLY WOULD AFFECT MALTA. MINTOFF EXCHANGED NUMEROUS, HIGHLY PUBLICIZED OFFICIAL VISITS DURING THE QUARTER WITH HIS FRIENDS IN THE NON-ALIGNED WORLD, ESPECIALLY THE ARAB COUNTRIES, BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE WAS VISIBLY RELIEVED THAT THE BRITISH DEFENSE REVIEW DID NOT RESULT IN AN IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF THE BRITISH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN

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MALTA. BILATERAL U.S.-MALTESE RELATIONS WERE EXCELLENT DURING

THE QUARTER. END SUMMARY.

## 2. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

THE "BIG" EVENT OF THE QUARTER, AND OF THE YEAR, WAS THE SUCCESSFUL CULMINATION OF MINTOFF'S LONG CRUSADE TO AMEND MALTA'S 1964 INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION, AND THE OFFICIAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW "REPUBLIC OF MALTA" ON DECEMBER 13.

FORECAST AS A CRUCIAL CONSTITUTIONAL AND PARLIAMENTARY CRISIS FOR THE COUNTRY, BUT A SUBJECT ON WHICH MINTOFF WOULD HAVE HIS WAY REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE RESULT WAS A "NO CONTEST" VICTORY FOR MINTOFF OVER A BEWILDERED AND DISORGANIZED NATIONALIST OPPOSITION. AFTER MONTHS OF OFFSTAGE MANEUVERING, INCLUDING NUMEROUS PRIVATE MEETINGS AMONG AND BETWEEN THE LABOR AND NATIONALIST PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS, MINTOFF'S SKILL AND DETERMINATION OVERWHELMED NATIONALIST LEADER BORG OLIVIER AND FORCED THE NATIONALISTS TO AGREE TO AN OPEN VOTE IN PARLIAMENT ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION. IN THE SHOWDOWN, ONLY SIX NATIONALIST MPS (INCLUDING BORG OLIVIER) VOTED AGAINST MINTOFF, GIVING MINTOFF TWENTY NATIONALIST VOTES AND AN IMPRESSIVE FORTY-NINE-TO-SIX VICTORY.

IN THE PROCESS, MINTOFF ACHIEVED HIS MAJOR AIMS: (A) ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC, WHILE REMAINING IN THE COMMONWEALTH; (B) ENACTMENT OF SEVERE PROHIBITIONS AND PENALTIES AGAINST FUTURE INTERFERENCE IN POLITICS BY MALTA'S NATIONALIST-ORIENTED CATHOLIC CHURCH; (C) GRANTING OF THE VOTE TO EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLDS (LIKE ANY OTHER POLITICIAN, MINTOFF HOPES AND EXPECTS TO PICK UP MOST OF THE YOUTH VOTE AT THE NEXT ELECTION); AND (D) CHANGES IN THE ELECTORAL LAWS, INCLUDING EXPANDING THE NUMBER OF DISTRICTS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (A MINTOFFIAN VERSION OF GERRYMANDERING IS INEVITABLE BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTION).

WHEN ALL WAS SAID AND DONE, MINTOFF WON A CLEAR-CUT PARLIAMENTARY VICTORY, DESPITE, OR BECAUSE OF, SEVERAL LEGAL NICETIES WHICH LEFT THE NATIONALISTS APOLOGETIC, AND LESS THAN CONVINCING, IN TRYING TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED TO A BEMUSED MALTESE ELECTORATE. AS THE RUNDOWN FOR THE NEXT ELECTION BEGINS, THE NATIONALISTS HAVE A LOT OF HARD WORK AHEAD TO REGROUP

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AS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO MINTOFF AND HIS LABORITE GOVERNMENT.

AS THE QUARTER ENDED, MINTOFF ADDRESSED THE NATION AS THE DIGNIFIED AND MODERATE, BUT OBVIOUSLY SELF-ASSURED, LEADER CALLING FOR A "UNIFIED" APPROACH TO MALTA'S PRESENT AND FUTURE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

IN HIS SPEECH, MINTOFF SUMMARIZED 1974 AS A DIFFICULT YEAR

FOR MALTA, BECAUSE OF WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, AND HE WARNED THAT THE YEAR AHEAD WOULD BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT. ACKNOWLEDGING MALTA'S GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM, MINTOFF ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF ANOTHER WORK/TRAINING CORPS, WHICH WILL BE EMPLOYED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THREE SHIPYARDPROJECTS EITHER PLANNED OR UNDERWAY ON THE ISLAND. THIS NEW JOB CORPS HAS ALL THE EARMARKS OF AN UPDATED WPA AND IS, IN ITSELF, AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN MALTA. THIS WILL BE THE THIRD "TEMPORARY" MAKE-WORK CORPS WHICH MINTOFF HAS ESTABLISHED DURING HIS THREE AND A HALF YEARS AS PRIME MINISTER.

MINTOFF CLOSED BY APPEALING FOR UNITY AND HARD WORK AS MALTA FACES THE FUTURE. HE MADE A SUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO APPEAR BEFORE THE PUBLIC AS THE STATESMAN MALTA NEEDS TO WEATHER THE ECONOMIC STORMS AHEAD, AND HIS "FATHER KNOWS BEST" APPROACH WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR THE NATIONALISTS TO REFUTE UNLESS, AND UNTIL, THEY PULL UP THEIR SOCKS AND MAKE A MORE CONVINCING CASE AGAINST MINTOFF'S PERFORMANCE AS PRIME MINISTER THAN THEY HAVE DONE OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS.

### 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 1974 SAW A CONTINUATION OF THE ECONOMIC TRENDS OF THE PREVIOUS QUARTER. MALTA'S TOURIST INDUTRY REPORTED RECORD NUMBERS OF VISITORS FOR THE YEAR AS A WHOLE, WHICH HELPED PARTIALLY TO OFFSET THE EFFECTS OF THE WORSENING INTENATIONAL RECESSION ON MALTA'S ECONOMY.

ALTHOUGH PRICES STILL ARE NOT AS MUCH OUT OF CONTROL IN MALTA AS THEY ARE IN SEVERAL OF ITS MAJOR EUROPEAN TRADING PARTNERS, INFLATION IS EATING INTO THE ISLAND'S FRAGILE, IMPORT-DEPENDENT ECONOMY. MINTOFF'S STATE-OPERATED, BULK-BUYING  
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SCHEMES AND FOOD AND MONETARY SUBSIDY PROGRAMS ARE HAVING A DAMPENING EFFECT ON INCREASES IN THE MALTESE COST OF LIVING, BUT HOW LONG MINTOFF CAN WITHSTAND THE COLD WINDS OF OUTSIDE ECONOMIC PRESSURE IS DEBATABLE. THERE ALSO IS INCREASING SUSPICION THAT THE GOM IS DOCTORING ITS STATISTICS, TO MASK THE REAL COST OF LIVING, FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES.

THE OTHER SIDE OF MINTOFF'S ECONOMIC COIN, UNEMPLOYMENT, REMAINS A SERIOUS PROBLEM, AND ONE THAT IS GETTING WORSE. OFFICIAL GOM STATISTICS ADMITTED TO 6,285 UNEMPLOYED AT THE END OF THE QUARTER. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS THERE HAVE BEEN A GROWING NUMBER OF PLANT SHUTDOWNS, SHORT WORK WEEKS, AND DISMISSALS AMONG MALTA'S FLEDGLING EXPORT INDUSTRIES, ESPECIALLY IN THE ELECTRONICS AND TEXTILE SECTORS. HERE AGAIN, THE INTERNATIONAL RECESSION IS THE CULPRIT. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE

APPROXIMATELY ANOTHER 3,500 NOW IN MINTOFF'S PIONEER CORPS,  
WHICH IS ITSELF A GOVERNMENT-FINANCED SUBSTITUTE FOR UNEMPLOY-  
MENT.

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MINTOFF CONTINUES TO LOOK FAR AND WIDE FOR NEW FOREIGN  
INVESTMENT TO EXPAND MALTA'S EXPORT-ORIENTED INDUSTRIAL BASE AS  
A COUNTERBALANCE TO HIS ENDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM. DURING  
THE LAST QUARTER HE WAS SUCCESSFUL IN SIGNING TWO NEW OIL CON-  
CESSION AGREEMENTS, ONE WITH THE DUTCH-OWNED JOC OIL COMPANY,  
AND THE OTHER WITH A FIVE-COMPANY CONSORTIUM WHICH INCLUDES  
CITIES SERVICE INTERNATIONAL. TERMS OF THE AGREEMENTS INCLUDE  
REQUIREMENTS THAT THE OIL COMPANIES ALSO INVEST IN INDUSTRIAL  
ACTITIES IN MALTA IN ADDITION TO PETROLEUM EXPLORATION. HOW-  
EVER, AS WITH THE OIL CONCESSION AGREEMENT SIGNED IN JUNE 1974  
WITH TEXACO, THESE NEW CONCESSION WILL NOT PROVIDE SHORT-RUN  
SOLUTIONS TO MINTOFF'S IMMEDIATE NEED FOR MORE JOBS FOR MALTESE  
WORKERS.

4. FOREIGN RELATIONS

PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF WAS VERY ACTIVE DURING THE QUARTER PROMOTING HIS SELF-APPOINTED ROLE AS WORLD STATESMAN, WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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SPEICAL ATTENTION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF "PEACE" IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA. CONVINCED THAT MALTA CAN SOMEHOW SERVE AS A "BRIDGE" BETWEEN EUROPE AND ARAB COUNTRIES, MINTOFF BUSIED HIMSELF PAYING POLITICAL DUES TO HIS ARAB FRIENDS IN HOPES OF OBTAINING CHEAP OIL AND INVESTMENT CAPITAL FOR MALTA IN EXCHANGE.

MINTOFF TOOK A SWING THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST FROM OCTOBER 4 TO 10, DURING WHICH HE STOPPED IN CAIRO, OMAN AND QATAR. FROM NOVEMBER 27 TO 30, HE WAS AGAIN IN MOTION, THIS TIME TO MOROCCO, PLUS AN EGO-BUILDING MEETING IN PARIS WITH GISCARD D'ESTAING TO DISCUSS "THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MEDITERRANEAN AND MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS."

IN RETURN, MALTA WAS HOST TO SEVERAL VISITING DELEGATIONS DURING THE QUARTER. EN ROUTE TO EUROPE, THE OMAN MINISTER OF EDUCATION VISITED MALTA OCTOBER 28-29, TO RETURN MINTOFF'S VISIT TO OMAN. ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT KAUNDA WAS IN MALTA ON NOVEMBER 18 EN ROUTE TO STATE VISITS TO ROMANIA, THE SOIVET UNION AND YUGO-SLAVIA.

MINTOFF PULLED OUT ALL THE STOPS FOR LIBYAN PRESIDENT QADHAFI ON DECEMBER 19-21, WHIEN QADHAFI BECAME THE FIRST HEAD OF STATE TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE NEW REPUBLIC OF MALTA. HIGHLY PUBLICIZED CEREMONIES AND LENGTHY PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS MARKED THE VISIT OF MINTOFF'S "NON-ALIGNED" ARAB NEIGHBOR. QADHAFI, FOR HIS PART, EMPHASIZED THAT THE LIBYAN AND MALTESE PEOPLES HAD A "MUTUAL HERITAGE" AND SHOULD CONSIDER THEMSELVES "BROTHERS," AN IDEA RECEIVED WITH MUCH LESS ENTHUSIASM BY THE AVERAGE MALTESE THAN BY MINTOFF, WHO ENDORSED QADHAFI'S CONCEPT OF BROTHERLY TIES.

AS USUAL WITH MINTOFF, ONLY VAGUE, POSITIVE-SOUNDING GENERALITIES RESULTED FROM ALL THE TO-ING AND FRO-ING. THE MALTESE PUBLIC, INCLUDING PARLIAMENT, WERE GIVEN NO DETAILS ON THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES DISCUSSED DURING MINTOFF'S SESSIONS WITH HIS HOSTS AND GUESTS. MINTOFF WILL ONLY DIVULGE SUCH INFORMATION WHEN AND WHERE IT SUITS HIS OWN PURPOSES, AS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE.

MINTOFF DID ANNOUNCE TO PARLIAMENT ON NOVEMBER 19 THE SIGN-CONFIDENTIAL

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ING OF A 15 MILLION FRANC LOAN AGREEMENT WITH FRANCE FOR THE PURCHASE OF FRENCH TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT. THIS LOAN WILL BE UTILIZED, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE JANUARY 1, 1975 TAKE-OVER OF BRITISH-OWNED CABLE AND WIRELESS, TO HELP FINANCE THE OPERATIONS OF MINTOFF'S NEW PARA-STATAL COMPANY, TELE-MALTA.

THE MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING MALTA DURING THE QUARTER WAS THE BRITISH DECISION, AS PART OF THEIR WORLD-WIDE DEFENSE REVIEW, THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE AN EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF THE BRITISH MILITARY FORCES FROM MALTA. HOWEVER, BRITISH DEFENSE SECRETARY MASON WROTE TO MINTOFF THAT THE PREVIOUSLY PLANNED REDUCTIONS WOULD BEGIN APRIL 1, 1977, AND BE COMPLETED BY MARCH 31, 1979, WHEN THE MILITARY FACILITIES AGREEMENT WITH MALTA EXPIRES. AS THE BRITISH DEFENSE PRESENCE MEANS SOME THIRTY MILLION MALTESE POUNDS PER YEAR TO THE ISLAND'S ECONOMY (IN DIRECT AND INDIRECT EXPENDITURES), THE BRITISH DECISION NOT TO ADVANCE THEIR WITHDRAWAL SCHEDULE WAS GREETED BY A COLLECTIVE SIGH OF RELIEF IN MALTA. THIS RELIEF WAS SHARED BY MINTOFF, WHO IS FULLY AWARE OF THE ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BRITISH PRESENCE, DESPITE HIS GRATUITOUS PUBLIC TIRADES AGAINST THE "FOREIGN IMPERIALIST BASE" IN MALTA.

#### 5. BILATERAL RELATIONS

OFFICIAL U.S./MALTESE RELATIONS WERE EXCELLENT DURING THIS QUARTER. PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF WAS MOST CORDIAL AND FRIENDLY DURING HIS INITIAL MEETINGS WITH THE AMBASSADOR, AS WERE OTHER GOM OFFICIALS IN THEIR CONTACTS WITH EMBASSY OFFICIERS.

MINTOFF AND THE MALTA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION MADE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO GIVE RED CARPET TREATMENT TO OPIC VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL BUTLER DURING HIS OCTOBER 24-25 VISIT TO MALTA, REFLECTING A STRONG GOM DESIRE TO ATTRACT NEW U.S. PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT. THE MOTOROLA DECISION TO DEFER ITS MALTA INVESTMENT PLANS BECAUSE OF THE WORLDWIDE DECLINE IN THE SEMI-CONDUCTOR MARKET WAS TAKEN IN STRIDE BY THE GOM, BUT OBVIOUSLY CAME AS A REAL DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE GOM COURT OF APPEALS RULED ON DECEMBER 16 THAT THE WESTINGHOUSE CONTRACT DISPUTE WOULD HAVE TO BE SETTLED BY COMPULSORY ARBITRATION, NOT IN THE MALTESE COURTS. THE NEXT STEP

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IS FOR WESTINGHOUSE AND THE MALTA ELECTRICITY BOARD TO AGREE ON A ARBITRAL REFEREE. IF THEY CANNOT, THE CASE WILL BE REFERRED TO THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ENGINEERS IN LONDON.

THE GOM MADE A REAL EFFORT TO COMPLETE THE TWO MILLION

DOLLAR U.S. EXCESS PROPERTY AGREEMENT BEFORE ITS SCHEDULED EXPIRATION ON DECEMBER 31, 1974. A THIRD CONSIGNMENT OF EXCESS PROPERTY WAS APPROVED FOR SHIPMENT TO MALTA FROM GERMANY DURING DECEMBER, BUT FINAL ACTION TO CLOSE THE AGREEMENT WAS STILL PENDING AS THE QUARTER ENDED.

THE GOM MOVED CLOSER TO A DECISION ON UTILIZATION OF THE FIVEMILLION DOLLAR U.S. LOAN AGREEMENT DURING THE QUARTER. IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE U.S. LOAN MAY BE USED TO ACQUIRE EQUIPMENT FOR THE SHIP CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR PROJECTS WHICH THE GOM HAS ON THE DRAWING BOARDS. BEFORE SUCH A DECISION IS TAKEN, HOWEVER, THE GOM HAS FIRST ASKED IF THE LOAN COULD BE CONVERTED TO A GRANT AGREEMENT. THIS REMAINED AN OPEN QUESTION AS 1974 CAME TO AN END. SMITH

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